

**SITUATION REPORT NO. 14**  
**INCIDENT NO. 97-015**  
**DATE: APRIL 7, 1997      TIME: 12:00 P.M.**

TO: Governor Edward T. Schafer  
State Capitol  
Bismarck, ND 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: Spring flood statewide.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: A Ransom County youth died during a trailer house fire believed to be started by a candle that was used after electrical service was disrupted during the April 5-6 blizzard.

A stranded Walsh County motorist apparently died of exposure during the storm. His body was found next to his vehicle.

Two eastern North Dakota families suffered from carbon monoxide poisoning, the result of portable generators that were not properly ventilated. In rural Grafton, a mother and her two children were treated and released from a local hospital, while the husband refused treatment and, instead, stayed at home to battle overland flooding. In Traill County, three members of a family were treated for carbon monoxide poisoning.

A lineman repairing a power line in Steele County was injured when he fell from a pole.

3. DAMAGES: A dangerous spring ice and snow storm paralyzed North Dakota during the April 5-6 weekend, creating life-threatening conditions, causing massive power outages and shutting down I-94, I-29, state and local road systems throughout the state. Snow prevented emergency vehicles from reaching their destinations. Gusty winds of up to 50 miles per hour (mph) made emergency air lifts for delivery of medical supplies impossible. The storm also prevented the delivery of flood-fight supplies to the Red River Valley, where residents had been battling rising waters expected to exceed flood-of-record stages at many locations. A combination of freezing rain and high winds has toppled local government and commercial radio and television towers, leaving many North Dakotans without access to emergency information. High winds compounded flooding problems, causing whitecaps on rivers and roadways already inundated with flood waters. Flooding and winter storm conditions caused the evacuation of many North Dakotans.

As North Dakotans dug out of their homes on April 7, classes for schools, businesses and local and state government were canceled or delayed. Thousands of North Dakotans were still without electricity. Governor Schafer, in cooperation with electric power providers, urged

all residents and businesses to limit their use of electricity to prevent major power outages. The N.D. Department of Transportation (N.D. DOT) reopened I-29, from Fargo to the Canadian border, but I-94 and other state and local road systems remain closed.

This latest snow storm compounds problems caused by a series of winter storms in January and February. North Dakota received a Major Presidential Disaster Declaration in January for snow removal assistance for local and state government. Rapid snow melt on lands already heavily saturated by four years of flooding has caused record spring runoff on nearly all rivers and tributaries throughout the state. These conditions, coupled with the April 5-6 storm, have caused: disastrous overland flooding, which is inundating homes and communities; massive power outages, which could disrupt water, sewage and electrical services; and blocked major transportation arteries, resulting from large snow drifts and washed-out culverts. Power outages disrupted electrical service to lift stations and emergency pumps already working at capacity to keep up with flood waters.

In the midst of the snow storm, the Maple, Wild Rice and Sheyenne Rivers crested above flood of record stages at three locations. The Grand Forks Emergency Management Office initiated Flood Warning Level I, issued when the Red River reaches 28 feet. The status of North Dakota rivers and tributaries above flood stage are as follows:

Station	Flood 4/5/97 24-hr		Flood of	
	Stage	Stage Difference	Record	
<u>Red River</u>				
Wahpeton	10 ft.	17.90 ft.	-1.26 ft.	18.5 ft.
Fargo	17 ft.	30.89 ft.	+2.76 ft.	37.5 ft.
Halstad, MN	24 ft.	30.92 ft.	+1.42 ft.	39 ft.
East Grand Forks	28 ft.	36.5 ft.	***	48.8 ft.
<u>Wild Rice</u>				
Abercrombie	10 ft.	26.41 ft.	+.09 ft.	24.6 ft.
<u>Maple River</u>				
Enderlin	6 ft.	9.48 ft.	+2.27 ft.	15.4 ft.
Mapleton	9 ft.	15 ft.	+4 ft.	15 ft.
<u>Goose River</u>				
Hillsboro	7 ft.	15.06 ft.	+.40 ft.	16.8 ft.
<u>Sheyenne River</u>				
Cooperstown 12 ft.	13.84 ft.	-1.99 ft.	18.69 ft.	
Lisbon	11 ft.	17.99 ft.	-.29 ft.	19 ft.
Kindred	16 ft.	21.80 ft.	+.68 ft.	21.7 ft.
<u>Forest River</u>				
Minto	6 ft.	(No reading available)		11.8 ft.
Fordville	8 ft.	(No reading available)		14.5 ft.
<u>Souris River</u>				
Foxholm	10 ft.	14.10 ft.	+.07 ft.	17.71 ft.
<u>Missouri River</u>				
Williston	20 ft.	20.12 ft.	-.03 ft.	28 ft.

\*\*\*The Red River gauge at Grand Forks was not operating on April 6.

Snow removal efforts have been hampered by roads and culverts washed out by flood waters. Saturated soils underneath the snow and the frost line are also making it difficult for

equipment to maneuver around on roads.

Stranded motorists throughout North Dakota were seeking shelter where possible, including approximately 90 travelers on I-94 near Hebron in Morton County. They were evacuated to Hebron where they stayed at private homes and at city hall. The city has been without power since midnight April 5, requiring emergency workers to install a generator to provide services at city hall.

Current conditions are also preventing ranchers and farmers from reaching their livestock. Many are still calving, and losses are expected to be heavy.

In Wahpeton, the National Weather Service reported that two inches of rain and additional snow during the weekend, compounding problems created by flooding on the Red and Wild Rice Rivers. No breaches of the city's dike occurred. However, runoff caused flash flooding in a seven-block area and inundated roads inside the dike's boundaries when dikes prevented runoff from draining into rivers. Flood waters are causing water seepage problems at the Richland County Law Enforcement Center.

As flood waters rise, North Dakotans living near rivers and tributaries have been stranded, requiring rescue efforts by boat and four wheel drive vehicles. Treacherous waters and ice are making rescues difficult.

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: No change from the first report.

STATE: No change from the first report.

FEDERAL: No change from the first and second reports.

5. VOLUNTEER ACTION: Volunteer organizations and churches throughout the state have opened shelters and are providing meals to motorists stranded by the storm and people evacuated from their homes because of rising flood waters.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: Governor Schafer requested on April 6 that the President of the United States issue a Major Presidential Disaster Declaration for North Dakota, as a result of severe flooding caused by rapid snow melt and a dangerous spring ice and snow storm that caused massive power outages throughout the state during the April 5-6 weekend. The governor had previously declared seven southwestern North Dakota counties as a disaster area. As a result of flooding and the latest winter storm events, he expanded that declaration on April 6 to include the remaining 46 counties. Governor Schafer requested that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) utilize its Individual Assistance, Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation assistance programs in response to the disaster.

Governor Schafer has designated Maj. Gen. Keith D. Bjerke, Adjutant General for the State of North Dakota, as the State Coordinating Officer (SCO).

The N.D. National Guard is responding to requests by utility companies for aerial flights to observe and assess damages.

National Guard personnel are also delivering pumps and generators to eastern North Dakota communities involved in flood fight operations. In Wahpeton, National Guard forces are transporting flood victims to shelters, and nurses and physicians to hospitals.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has completed flood preparedness advanced measures in the city of Enderlin and Fort Ransom. Those projects include dike construction.

The U.S. Navy's emergency preparedness liaison officer has been activated to assist with obtaining federal assets for flood relief efforts.

The U.S. Coast Guard officer-in-charge for the St. Paul area met with the SCO and representatives of the N.D. State Water Commission and the N.D. Division of Emergency Management on April 5 to discuss flood response plans. As previously reported, the Coast Guard has three 14-foot boats and personnel assigned to North Dakota.

N.D. DOT crews plowed roads for ambulance workers responding to medical emergencies in Amidon and Steele. Crews also cleared roads to enable Montana-Dakota Utilities (MDU) repair crews to reach the Hebron-Richardton area, where they restored power.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: None at this time.
8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: No change from previous reports.
9. OTHER: The Division of Emergency Management's Situation Reports for the spring flood, Devils Lake flood and winter storm are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is: "<http://www.state.nd.us/dem>".

The N.D. State Water Commission posts flood-related information on its Internet home page. The address is "<http://water.swc.state.nd.us>". The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's has a "Water Control Home Page" at "<http://www.ncs-wc.usace.army.mil>". The U.S. Geological Survey's Internet home page address is: "<http://srv1dndbmk.cr.usgs.gov/public/>".

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Raymond J. Staiger, Acting State Director